

God Enlists

April 29, 2017

Fr Jean-Michel Gleize, Theology Professor at the Écône seminary of the Society of St Pius X, has written on burning problems of today two articles which throw interesting light on their solution. Firstly, can the Pope fall into formal heresy? Answer, maybe, because Popes have not always been held to be so free from error as they have been held to be in the last few centuries. And secondly, does the Papal document *Amoris Laetitia* show that Pope Francis has fallen into formal heresy? Answer, strictly speaking, no, but in effect, one may say so, because neo-modernism undermines doctrine while pretending to uphold it. This second question will have to wait for another issue of these "Comments," but if Fr Gleize did not want to be caught between sedevacantism and liberalism, he had to broach the first question first.

In the first and shorter article, he says that from the Protestant "Reformation" onwards, Catholic theologians in general, notably St Robert Bellarmine, have held that the Pope cannot fall into conscious and stubborn denial of Church dogma, i.e. formal heresy. They quote Our Lord telling Peter to confirm his brethren in the Faith (Lk. XXII, 32), which presupposes that Peter cannot lose it. And they argue that never in Church history has a Pope fallen into formal heresy. On the other hand prior to the Protestant revolution, says Fr Gleize, Catholic theologians from the 12th to the 16th century generally judged that a Pope can fall into formal heresy, and this opinion has continued into modern times, albeit less commonly.

Fr Gleize concludes that especially in view of the Conciliar Popes, the later theologians have not proved their point. As for Peter always being protected by Our Lord from formal heresy, faith is an act of the mind pushed by free-will, and

God rarely interferes with free-will. And as for Popes in history, Honorius for example was anathematised by his successors for having favoured the Monothelite heresy. This conclusion is for sure disputable and disputed, but if one looks at the question from the historical standpoint of the Seven Ages of the Church, it does make sense.

By three Ages (Apostles 33–70, Martyrs 70–312, and Doctors 312 to about 500 AD), the Church climbed to the Fourth Age, the 1,000 year triumph of Christendom (about 500–1517). But by the late Middle Ages the Devil and original sin were eating into Christendom, and men launched into the Fifth Age of Apostasy (1517-?), whereby degenerating Christians invented one form of hypocrisy after another (Protestantism, Liberalism, Communism amongst others) to pay homage to Christian virtue and civilisation even while “liberating” themselves for the latest vice, e.g. same-sex “marriage.” Now God could have made the Middle Ages go on for ever, but He would have had to interfere with free-will. As it was, He gave to His Church a special crop of Saints to lead the Counter-Reformation, and over the next half-millennium He obtained, to vary the population of His Heaven, a harvest of post-medieval Saints. But to counter-act the corruption of post-medieval man, God chose to re-inforce authority in His Church, so that souls wishing for salvation but no longer enough so by inner virtue, could at least be directed by outer authority towards Heaven. Then of course the Devil set to work especially on churchmen in high positions of authority and after nearly half a millennium it is as though the Lord God said, “If you do not want My Church, then have your own Newchurch,” and that was Vatican II.

So now Church authority is damaged beyond all human repair, and He will use some other means to wring out of our spiritually exhausted world yet another harvest of souls. A Chastisement will ensure the initial brilliance of the Church of the Sixth Age, but the Devil and original sin will have a human nature to work on that has been weakened in depth by the

Fifth Age's liberalism, so that it should not take too long to bring on the Seventh Age of the Antichrist. But that will be an Age of some of the greatest Catholics of all Church history – a crop of especially great Saints.

Kyrie eleison.